

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CHURCH HOUSE, LECHLADE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**CHURCH HOUSE, LECHLADE**

Name: CHURCH HOUSE, LECHLADE

County: Gloucestershire

District: Cotswold (District Authority)

Parish: Lechlade

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.693303  
Longitude: -1.6901463  
National Grid Reference: SU 21514 99440  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000769  
Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

## Details

C18 formal gardens with a large rectangular pool and two C18 garden buildings.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Parts of Church House and its garden, such as the gate piers to the north and south of the House, and probably the summerhouse, may have been constructed by Francis Smith of Warwick (1662-1738) (owner pers comm, 1999). The Ainge family, from Cirencester, lived at Church House from the C17 (Williams 1888). They were wharfingers who traded from the Old Wharf at the end of the garden (VCH 1981). John Ainge (d 1714) was a warden in St Lawrence's church in 1678 and his son Richard (d 1730) lived at Church House in the early C18. In 1730, the house was squared for Richard Ainge (presumably Richard's son) and the gazebo and summerhouse were probably added. Rudder (1779) says that Richard Ainge had a good house and estate in the parish which presumably refers to Church House. When Richard died without issue in 1778, the estate passed to his sister, Catherine Hughes, and later, by marriage, to the Golding family. By 1888, the Walker family, descendants of the Ainges, owned Church House. They remained in residence until the First World War, after which the Stephens family purchased the house. Church House changed hands again in the 1950s and remains (2000) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Church House stands in the south-east quarter of the village of Lechlade, which is c 20km east of Cirencester and 15km north of Swindon. The House is 50m to the south-east of St Lawrence's church and the gardens extend mainly south and west from the House. The sub-rectangular registered area of c 1ha shares its stone north wall with the churchyard. The western hedge and eastern wall separate the gardens from village houses and a school (built 1835 by the church) respectively. The southern boundary is a ha-ha, dividing an orchard from a paddock beyond which leads down to the River Thames, c 100m to the south. The gardens are a few metres higher than the River Thames and have open views to the river and watermeadows beyond and to Ha'penny Bridge (built 1792) to the south-west. The church of St Lawrence also forms an important visual element of the garden scheme and can be seen from most parts of the gardens.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach to Church House is from the churchyard to its north. A path (Shelley's Walk) runs east/west, north of the church, and another path off this leads south to Church House. Two square, 3m high ashlar

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piers, with indented corners and ball finials on a moulded plinth (listed grade II with Church House) support a late C20 wrought-iron gate and overthrow. Matching late C20 railings on a low coped wall of coursed rubble stone, probably of late C19 or early C20 date, extend east and west from the gate. Beyond the gate, a flagged stone path extends south to the front door.

A back entrance to Church House is via a small courtyard, flanked by garden buildings on its east and south sides, just outside the north-west part of the registered area, leading off a lane to the west of the church.

The Old Wharf, a small wharf c 100m south-south-east of Church House, was excavated and restored in the late C20. This once provided access from the river.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The central core of Church House (listed grade II) was probably constructed in the late C17 but the House was enlarged and refronted in the early C18. The main, central square range, of rubble stone with alternating chamfered quoins, has two storeys and an attic. The two flanking wings, extending east and west, were built after the First World War, in similar materials. The interior panelling of the sitting room in the central range exactly matches that of the gazebo.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** To the north of the central range of Church House is a small square forecourt (c 10 x 10m). It is enclosed by a low stone wall and iron railings to the north, a wall of the House to the south, and walls of stone-capped coursed rubble and cut stone to the west and east. These walls are c 2m high, except where a stone shed forms part of the east wall, increasing its height to c 3m. A straight, stone-flagged path leads from the entrance gates, across the forecourt, to the front door and is flanked by a small lawn to each side, with herbaceous borders between the lawns and walls. A large, clipped Irish yew tree grows just outside this compartment, to the east, and is highly visible from it. At the south-east corner of the forecourt, a wooden gate in the wall gives access to a small enclosed yard. At the south-west corner of the forecourt, a C20 wrought-iron gate leads west to the kitchen garden. A gravel path along the wall of the House connects the two gates.

Between the forecourt and the kitchen garden is another small rectangular compartment (also c 10 x 10m), originally part of the kitchen garden. The gravel path from the forecourt continues west as a flagged path, on the same alignment, across this compartment. To the south of the path is an area of gravel, bisected by a path to the house. To the north is a small, formal, late C20 herb garden in a square bed divided by six narrow paths, leading to a central urn. A two-storey, square, rendered stone gazebo (early to mid C18, listed grade II) with a pyramidal stone slate roof stands outside this compartment to the north-west, and is visible from it, with its basement accessed at the north-west corner of the compartment. A window in its north side overlooks the churchyard. A low wall of coursed rubble and three stone steps divide the compartment from the kitchen garden, which is to the west and at a slightly higher level than the ornamental gardens.

A broad gravel walk extends along the south face of the House to a wooden gate in the east wall of the gardens. The south side of the path's western half is supported by a 2m high wall, to the south of which is the fishpond. At the west end of the path, five stone steps lead up to the kitchen garden. At the top of the steps is a pair of C20 wrought-iron gates between tall ashlar gate piers with ball finials, thought to be earlier than the piers to the north and south of the House (owner pers comm, 1999).

Another gravel path leads south from the middle of the first, at right angles to the House and aligned on a window (formerly a door) in the east part of the southern face of the central range. To the east of the path is a large rectangular croquet lawn (c 50m long), with a crinkle-crinkle eastern edge. An herbaceous border lies between the lawn and the wall, which is mainly brick, with an eastern stone section. At the south end of the lawn, and separated from it by a low yew hedge, is a nuttery of coppiced hazel. The south side of the nuttery is supported by a 1.5m high stone wall. At the south end of the path is another pair of gate piers, almost identical to those to the north of Church House (but unlisted). It is likely that there would once have been railings between the piers, forming a *clairvoie* (owner pers comm, 1999). Stone steps lead south from the piers, down to a rectangular lawn edged by low rubble walls to the south and east and formerly used as a tennis court. A gap in the centre of the south wall leads to a grass walk, running east/west, edged to the south by a beech hedge. The walk leads east to the wharf, which was excavated and restored in the early 1970s. A strip of woodland, with grass and shrubs, extends along the east side of the wharf, down to the river.

The rectangular pool (c 50 x 10m) extends south from a point c 5m from the west wing of the House. It is thought to have been a fishpond (owner pers comm, 1999), rather than a Dutch-style water garden as suggested by Verey (1970), and is c 2m lower than the garden to the east and 3m lower than the garden to the west, with sloping grass banks. The stone edge was replaced in

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the late C20 when the central fountain was put in. At its south end is a stone bench, in front (north) of a screen of yew trees. Some 5m south-west of the pool is a late C20 rectangular stone-flagged terrace, c 10m long and enclosed by low stone walls to the east, north, and west, and by wrought-iron railings to the south, above the ha-ha.

A large rectangular orchard (c 60 x 80m) extends south of the kitchen garden and west of the pool. Apple and pear trees, planted in rows, are mostly less than forty years old, although some older trees remain. A ha-ha divides the orchard from the paddock to the south.

The gardens have been developed since the mid C20 but originated in the C18. Unfortunately, there are no documents to help confirm the C18 layout.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is bounded by the wall of the churchyard to the north, by garden buildings to the west, by the House to the east, and by a low stone wall to the south, along which runs a narrow herbaceous border over which there are views of the orchard. A stone-edged rose bed extends north/south along the west end of the House, but the rest of the kitchen garden is divided into two large rectangular beds, surrounded by gravel paths, for vegetables and soft fruit. The central path has a kink in it, indicating the position of a former thatched stone barn which stood against the churchyard wall until at least 1876, and probably until the end of the C19 (owner pers comm, 1999).

At the north-west corner of the kitchen garden is a stone barn with a stone-tiled pitched roof and a dovecote built into the eaves. A stone wall, c 2m high, extends south from the barn and, at the south-west corner of the garden, joins an east-facing C18 summerhouse (listed grade II) which Verey (1970) calls 'a small classical later C18 summerhouse or pavilion, brick-faced, with stone dressings'. To each side of the summerhouse, a late C20 wrought-iron gate is set into the wall. An axial gravel path runs east from the summerhouse, to meet that along the south face of the House.

#### REFERENCES

S Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779) A Williams, *Lechlade: being the history of the town, manor and estates, the priory and the church* (1888) D Verey, *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire The Cotswolds* (1970), p 295 Victoria History of the County of Gloucester VII, (1981), pp 116, 119-120

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1876, published 1884 2nd edition published 1901 3rd edition revised 1915, published 1923

Archival items Lechlade WI, Lechlade 1850-1957, (33375), (Gloucester Local Studies Library) Photographs (private collection)

Description written: January 2000 Register Inspector: TVAC Edited: March 2003

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.